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Chairman: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)
later: Mr. Peralta (*Vice-Chairman*) ..... (Paraguay)
later: Mr. Majoor ..... (Netherlands)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 97: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.10)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.10: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

1. **Ms. Zarra** (Italy) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.10, which her country was sponsoring. She said that its two main purposes were to highlight the importance of the fight against transnational organized crime in the broader framework of United Nations policies and activities, and to reaffirm the membership's support for the technical-assistance activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), drawing the attention of the competent organs to the need for resources to strengthen those activities. The draft contained some essential updates to the 2007 version and a few new additions, namely, references to the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, held in February 2008, General Assembly resolution 62/172 of December 2007 entitled "Technical assistance for implementing the international conventions and protocols related to terrorism" and decision 17/2 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, of April 2008, entitled "Improving the governance and financial situation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime".

2. With regard to violence against women and girls, a new paragraph 11 had been added to include a reference to decision 17/1 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. On cybercrime, described as one of the emerging policy issues that UNODC must address, major work had been done to implement several resolutions that already favoured expanded UNODC technical assistance in that area. Lastly, three paragraphs had been added to underline the need to finance the increasing activities of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, UNODC and the conferences of States parties to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Convention against Corruption. Paragraph 14 described the current activity of the open-ended working group established by the Commission to improve the Office's governance and financial situation, while paragraphs 9 and 15 focused on the conferences of States parties. Those paragraphs addressed the core principle according to which those bodies must conform to the highest standards of objectivity and impartiality. The best way to ensure that they did so was to guarantee that their financial needs and those of their secretariats were covered by the regular budget.

3. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of the Committee) said that Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Turkey had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 98: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.8)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.8: International cooperation against the world drug problem

4. **Mr. Sánchez Colín** (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.8, sponsored by Mexico. He said that its purpose was to reaffirm that countering the drug problem was a shared responsibility that required an integrated and balanced approach. To that end, the General Assembly urged all States to honour their commitment to achieve the goals set for 2008 at its twentieth special session.

5. Moreover, the draft resolution contained new references to the priority themes addressed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its latest session. In particular, it alluded to the link between illicit weapons trafficking and drug trafficking, and highlighted the importance of strengthening control of chemicals and chemical precursors. In addition, it further emphasized the need for States to evaluate progress towards achieving the goals set at the twentieth special session, given that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would be holding a high-level segment devoted to States parties' accounts of their progress at its fifty-second session. Lastly, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it a report on the implementation of the resolution at its next session.

6. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of the Committee) announced that Benin, Cape Verde, Chile, Guatemala, Haiti, Mauritania, Paraguay, Peru, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 60: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/63/41)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/63/160, 203 and 227)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/63/308)

7. **Ms. Juul** (Norway) said that the States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had the obligation to provide their countries with systems for securing children's rights, including legal frameworks, policies and services to promote those rights, as well as ways of preventing and responding to violations of them. The Convention should be used as a guide to States in their efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those relating to education and health.

8. Expressing appreciation for the way in which the Committee on the Rights of the Child was carrying out its monitoring role and noting that its general comments provided States with valuable tools for implementing the Convention, she said that her Government was taking measures to strengthen children's rights and to follow up actively the Committee's recommendations. Norway was furthermore prepared to support the request to the General Assembly in the annex to document A/63/160 for the Committee to work in two chambers, and called on the Third Committee and the Fifth Committee to add their support.

9. As for follow-up to the Declaration in General Assembly resolution 62/88, the international community should continue to develop and share practices regarding children's participation in decisions that affected them. Norway suggested that the General Assembly should address that topic in 2009, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention.

10. The protection of children from violence should be kept at the forefront of national, regional and international agendas. The United Nations study on violence against children had proved very useful, but its global impact should be strengthened as a matter of urgency by the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General, in accordance with the request made in General Assembly resolution 62/141.

11. Norway also highlighted its concern regarding the continued use of the death penalty for crimes committed before the age of 18 years, which was in clear breach of the Convention. One of the overarching recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children was to abolish the use of the death penalty and life imprisonment for children, and the Secretary-General should report on its implementation by Member States at the next session of the General Assembly. Norway was of the opinion that the omnibus draft resolution on the rights of the child should include that recommendation, and welcomed the call made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the protection of children deprived of their liberty and for improving their treatment.

12. Lastly, she said her country fully supported the important advocacy work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and supported the renewal of her mandate and the provision of adequate resources to her office in order to maintain the high quality of its work. Norway approved of the priority areas for action outlined by the Special Representative in her report but would nonetheless welcome a strategic workplan in due course that could facilitate strong partnerships. Norway would continue to work closely with the Special Representative in areas where it could be of assistance, such as ending gender-based violence, the issue of small arms, landmines and cluster munitions, and the role of children in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

13. **Ms. Yoong** (Singapore) said that her country fully supported the goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which it had acceded in 1995. She drew attention to one of the major strands of the Convention, children's right to basic health, which was directly relevant to Goal 4 of the Millennium Development Goals ("Reduce child mortality"), and noted that, according to the World Health Organization, Singapore, together with Iceland, had the lowest infant-mortality rate and its population enjoyed one of the highest life expectancies in the world. That was due to robust health-screening and immunization programmes. A National Immunization Registry had been established in order to collect and maintain accurate, complete and current vaccination records of Singaporean children up to the age of 18.

14. The second major strand of the Convention, children's right to education, tied in with Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals, on universal primary education. Singapore had made great progress in that

respect and its education system was now well regarded throughout the world. Almost all children in the country received 10 years of education and 93 per cent of them went on to post-secondary education.

15. Believing that, even at a tender age, children could and wanted to contribute to society, the authorities had established in all schools a community-service and involvement programme; under it, pupils were encouraged to contribute in each school year, and according to their abilities, a minimum of six hours of community service, which in their enthusiasm, however, they often exceeded. Responsible world citizens were thus being formed. She noted lastly that Singapore's bid to host the inaugural Youth Olympics in 2010 had been successful and that the Games would offer young people around the world an opportunity to show their worth.

16. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that her country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994 and had incorporated its provisions into its national legislation. In the current year, it had submitted its third periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Human rights protection was one of the key concerns of the Government, and significant legislative amendments had been adopted to bring Georgian legislation into line with the standards set out in international human rights instruments.

17. During the military aggression carried out by the Russian Federation against Georgia, there had been very grave violations of children's rights and human rights. Since August 2008, the conflict had caused heavy damage and wreaked destruction in the country and, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, had displaced around 115,000 persons, nearly 40 per cent of whom were children under the age of 16. The Government was making every effort to help refugees and displaced children. Ethnic violence, looting, murder and other forms of violence had left many children with psychological scars. Unfortunately, urgently needed humanitarian aid for women and children had been blocked by the Russian occupying forces. The aggression had left thousands of women and children homeless.

18. The Russian invasion had already had serious direct and indirect effects on Georgia's education system. Because of the widespread use of landmines and cluster-munitions by the Russian armed forces, many buildings were unsafe and would need to be demined before being used again. Hundreds of schools of every level had been turned into emergency shelters and thousands of students and their teachers had been displaced. The start of the academic year 2008/09 had had to be postponed in many areas and a large number of schools had been damaged or looted. In the longer term, other problems were likely to arise, including a higher risk of academic failure among displaced children, as they usually had a higher dropout rate than other children. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Science had already terminated or suspended a number of education and research programmes; if that were to happen to other programmes, the very future of Georgia's dynamic education-reform programme would be at risk. Lastly, Georgian-speaking children who had returned to the Gali district, which was controlled by separatists, were deprived of their fundamental right to study in their mother tongue as the de facto regime prohibited the use of Georgian in education.

19. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) said that his Government had been doing its utmost to protect and promote children's rights through the adoption of legislative and administrative measures aimed at creating the conditions necessary for the realization of those rights. As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in early 2008 his Government had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its second periodic report on implementation of the Convention for the period 2000-2006 (CRC/C/MOZ/2). It had ratified a number of international instruments, including the Optional Protocols to that Convention as well as International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos. 138 (Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) and 182 (Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour). It was working to harmonize its legislation with international norms: the new Constitution of 2005 gave the Convention on the Rights of the Child equal status with domestic legislation; in 2008, Parliament had adopted laws relating, inter alia, to the protection of children; and reforms had been undertaken in relation to the civil registry, legal assistance for minors and family law. In 2006, the Government had adopted a national action plan for children (2006-2011), the main priority of which was to support activities aimed at promoting the welfare of children, in particular in the areas of health and education. Special attention was being devoted to the needs of vulnerable children; for example a multisectoral plan for orphans and

vulnerable children had been drawn up to ensure that they had access to basic services. In addition, a coordination mechanism had been set up to involve the public and private sectors and civil society in the drafting of legislation, budgeting, programme planning and monitoring and evaluation activities, with the Government, however, retaining responsibility for coordination and ensuring the effectiveness of such efforts.

20. Great challenges must still be overcome in achieving a world fit for children, as evidenced by the current global crises. Realization of the rights of children could only be achieved if their parents and societies enjoyed an acceptable standard of living. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would be an important step in that regard. World political leaders must likewise make a commitment to promote fairer and more balanced social and economic progress.

21. His Government would continue to promote and protect the rights of children, who were the future of mankind.

22. **Mr. Palihakkara** (Sri Lanka) recalled the commitments made by Member States at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children and noted that Sri Lanka had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto nearly two decades earlier. His Government had since been very proactive in implementing the Convention.

23. Measures had been adopted to protect children's rights and help all children grow and achieve their full potential in a safe and secure environment. Children under 18 constituted 36 per cent of the population of Sri Lanka, and one fifth of the population was of school-going age. The literacy rate had reached 93 per cent, a level comparable to countries with much higher gross national products. Those figures could be attributed to his Government's investments in free education and policies aimed at ensuring universal access to education. Some elements of the millennium development targets relating to education had already been achieved; others would also be achieved, and well before the target date. The sustained decline in child and maternal mortality and universal child immunization were examples of achievements made possible by the free public-health system.

24. Sri Lanka was making every effort to protect the rights of children with disabilities and had been one of the first signatories to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His Government provided disabled children with specialized education and health care and protected them from abuse and neglect. A comprehensive law implementing the Convention was under preparation.

25. The Children and Young Persons Ordnance and the reform of the Penal Code were examples of measures adopted to combat child exploitation and sexual abuse. Sri Lanka had also put in place a strict legal regime to protect children's rights in cases of adoption. With respect to inter-country adoptions in particular, it was a State party to and was bound by the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. His Government's policy towards child offenders stressed rehabilitation. It had established, a decade earlier, a National Child Protection Authority to prevent child abuse, prosecute offenders and assist victims.

26. The plight of children affected by armed conflict continued to be a matter of grave concern. His Government's efforts to combat the abhorrent practice of recruiting child soldiers had however been thwarted by the actions of the terrorist group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which in spite of promises made continued to recruit child soldiers; since 2002, 6,273 had been recruited. On the other hand, a breakaway group, the Tamil Makkal Viduthali Pulikal, which had renounced terrorism and entered the democratic process, had already released 39 children and would probably soon release the remaining 127. A national task force had been set up to implement his Government's policy of zero tolerance for child recruitment; it was working to follow up the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict and to implement the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. Programmes had been established to facilitate the reintegration of child combatants, in particular for those remaining in the Eastern Province after the expulsion of the LTTE, by promoting family reunification and/or access to education and employment. The remaining child conscripts held by the LTTE should likewise soon be freed and would be provided with the same services.

27. Sri Lanka had a long-standing commitment to promoting economic and social development and social justice. It would continue to cooperate with the United Nations with a view to promoting and protecting children's rights and well-being as key elements of its national development plans and strategies.

28. **Mr. Álvarez** (Uruguay) said that the promotion and protection of children's rights were of primordial importance for his Government. Children were a vulnerable group; policies must be adapted to meet their needs at various stages in their lives and to protect their rights in accordance with the Constitution, the Children and Youth Code, other domestic legislation and international instruments. Children and youths could likewise appeal to the courts to have their rights upheld. The Honorary Advisory Committee on the Rights of Children and Youth, made up of representatives from the public authorities and civil society, was responsible for coordinating activities and studying all aspects of issues affecting the rights of children and adolescents and for making proposals to strengthen the coordination of sectoral policies and promote dialogue between civil society and the authorities. Measures had been adopted to follow up the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and widely disseminate those recommendations as well as the results of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, which had been submitted to Parliament in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the NGO Save the Children.

29. The increase in child poverty was of particular concern. According to his Government's most recent periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/URY/2), which covered a period of economic crisis, more than 60 per cent of children under 18 were living below the poverty line. Although that figure had been reduced by more than 10 percentage points over the past two years, much more remained to be done. Child-related issues had for example been taken into account in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, leading to progress in a number of areas.

30. Violence against and exploitation and abuse of children were of particular concern. They could be attributed to such factors as poverty, dropping out of school and domestic violence. In order to remedy and eliminate those scourges, the authorities and civil society must coordinate their efforts and provide all stakeholders with the means to identify and address problems with a view to eliminating illicit acts and protecting victims.

31. Violence could never be justified and was preventable. His delegation had made every effort to ensure the appointment of a Special Representative on violence against children and regretted that no such appointment had as yet been made, despite the request to that end contained in General Assembly resolution 62/141. He therefore expressed concern that requests for information in that regard submitted to the Secretariat by numerous delegations had gone unanswered. The Secretariat should consult delegations and provide them with information promptly and should also provide an explanation for the excessive delay in the appointment.

32. **Mr. Anwar** (India) said that despite commitments undertaken to build a world fit for children, not all targets had been met.

33. The review of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals had exposed the gap between targets and actual progress, especially in some parts of the world. There were still more than 73 million children not receiving primary education, with only 53 per cent of young people attending secondary school. While under-five mortality had decreased, a considerable number of countries would not reach the target of reducing it by two thirds by 2015, mainly because the primary causes of the phenomenon had not been addressed. Eradicating poverty, providing drinking water and combating environmental pollution would help to ensure the implementation of children-specific programmes.

34. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict was making commendable efforts to protect children's rights and promote the reintegration of child soldiers; however, it was disheartening that more than two million children had lost their lives in conflict zones and that six million had been disabled for life. The international community should address that issue as a matter of high priority.

35. At the national level, India was committed to the development of all children and the recognition and protection of their rights. An integrated child-development-services programme catered for children under six years of age as well as pregnant women and lactating mothers, currently with 41 million

beneficiaries. In 2008, a conditional cash-transfer scheme had been launched to encourage families to seek medical care for their daughters, if needed, and to send them to school. An integrated child-protection scheme had also been introduced to promote the development and well-being of children in difficult circumstances. In addition, some provisions of the 2000 Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act had been revised for reasons of uniformity and simplification, guidelines had been developed to combat child prostitution and, in 2007, a National Commission for Protection of Child Rights had been established to enforce children's rights and ensure implementation of laws and programmes relating to children. A procedure was also being instituted for analysing budgetary allocations and actual expenditures and identifying deficiencies in State policy towards children. Thanks to a universal elementary-education scheme (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), the number of unschooled children had diminished. In addition, 6 per cent of the country's GDP would be devoted to education in 2007-2012.

36. India was committed not only to realizing all the goals identified, but to achieving still higher standards.

37. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that, despite progress achieved since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the situation of children remained as precarious as before in many parts of the world. The General Assembly had voiced its concern in that regard at its commemorative high-level plenary meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children, in December 2007. The international community should therefore spare no efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, which were far from being achieved. All was not gloom, however, since considerable progress had been made in such fields as combating childhood diseases and promoting education.

38. Since the publication, in 1996, of the Machel report (A/51/306 and Add.1), the issue of children in armed conflict had been in the limelight. Conflict and terrorism today presented an even greater danger to children, however. In some areas, non-State actors had proliferated as parties to conflicts, showing scant respect for human rights and often targeting civilians. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had reported (A/63/227), children were vulnerable both physically and psychologically and were even used as suicide bombers. Indoctrination could lead to grave violations of children's rights and was a threat wherever it occurred. Reports of Hamas-run "summer camps" in the Middle East were alarming; instead of playing, children were being taught to fight. Unless Member States and the special-procedures system resolutely addressed the scourges of indoctrination and incitement which led to terrorism, entire generations would be lost.

39. Sexual violence had, for its part, become commonplace in conflict; used against children, it became a tool of war, particularly shocking to civilized nations. Impunity must not be tolerated, and the Organization's policy of zero tolerance in that regard must be implemented swiftly and in all transparency.

40. At the national level, the Knesset's Special Committee on the Rights of the Child worked to advance the status of children and to assist them in exercising their rights in accordance with international agreements. Having ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Israel in 2008 had ratified the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It was, moreover, proud to be among those States that had banned corporal punishment.

41. She looked forward to the speedy appointment of a Special Representative on violence against children. She appealed to all States to generously support the admirable work of UNICEF, and urged the international community to join Israel in rendering assistance wherever it was needed in order to guarantee the security of children in all its aspects; the task was daunting, but must be addressed without further delay.

42. **Mr. Nhleko** (Swaziland) said that his country's Constitution safeguarded the rights of children, and in particular the right to free primary education, which was scheduled to be achieved in 2009 as part of the attainment of Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals. As a signatory to the 2008 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, his country supported equal access for boys and girls in primary and secondary education with a view to eradicating illiteracy by 2020.

43. Among the measures taken by his country, which was a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was moving to adopt the two Optional Protocols thereto, he noted the establishment of a

children's unit under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to address child-protection issues, in conjunction with the Government authorities and non-governmental organizations.

44. Accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto was also planned, to be followed by implementation of a national policy for persons with disabilities, especially children.

45. He noted that the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/63/308) had stressed the large number of cases of violence, exploitation and discrimination that children, particularly girls, continued to suffer, as well as the recruitment of child soldiers, trafficking in children, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In his country, where HIV/AIDS had been declared a national disaster as early as 2001, there were programmes to raise awareness among children and youths, including in the schools. To assist and protect the many orphans and children left vulnerable by HIV/AIDS, particularly child heads of household, the Government had launched a national action plan for 2006-2010. That plan focused on neighbourhood care centres known as kaGogo and Indlunkhulu centres, which provided food, shelter and basic education. They were managed by adults who helped such children acquire the skills they needed to live on their own. The Government was also enhancing legislation on violence against children.

46. He said that he looked forward to the appointment of a Special Representative on violence against children, noting with concern that no annual reports to the General Assembly would be available until such an appointment had been made.

47. **Mr. Christian** (Ghana) expressed his delegation's appreciation for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and called for long-term action by the international community in that regard. Noting that young persons made up 50 per cent of the population on the African continent, he stressed the importance of the call for accelerated action on the implementation of the plan of action towards Africa fit for children (2008-2012), which had identified 10 priority-action areas for the protection and development of African children.

48. In that regard, his Government had set the objectives of ensuring free and compulsory high-quality education for both girls and boys, combating malaria and malnutrition, early-childhood-development interventions, preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, and making prenatal care available throughout the country.

49. As part of its struggle against violence against children, his country had reformed its legislation extensively and created several child-protection units within its police force and other institutions. Those legislative reforms had been complemented by numerous policies addressing, inter alia, orphans and other persons who were vulnerable owing to the HIV/AIDS crisis, disabled persons and street children. In 2007, with major support from UNICEF, it had adopted a national child-protection strategy designed to protect poor and vulnerable children, particularly those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS and those vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, in collaboration with development partners and with the support of civil society, the Government was working to raise awareness of the problem of violence against children and change people's attitudes. In accordance with the recommendations of the 2006 United Nations Study on Violence against Children, which shed light on the full scale of the problem, Ghana had launched a five-year plan of action for 2008-2012.

50. He stressed that his country, like many others, still had much to do before legislative reforms brought about a genuine change in attitudes and behaviour. The goal of a world fit for children was still far from being achieved.

51. *Mr. Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

52. **Ms. Nadjaf** (Afghanistan) thanked Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her insightful briefing and for her recent visit to Afghanistan.

53. She said that her Government was still rebuilding after 30 years of a war whose main victims had been children, particularly girls. Since the fall of the Taliban, the Government had made efforts to promote and safeguard the rights of children in the face of enormous obstacles. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols and had put in place a monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612

(2005), which would further contribute to implementation of its national strategy on children at risk. It would also remain committed through the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children".

54. In the area of education, she called on international partners to support her country's national strategic plan for education, whose objectives included the development of schools that were closer to home to facilitate girls' access to education. Although six million children, 35 per cent of whom were girls, had already returned to school, there were still 1.2 million girls not receiving education, partly owing to lack of security.

55. In the area of health, considerable progress had been made, with 81 per cent of the population having access to health care, although child mortality and maternal mortality remained among the highest in the world. Afghanistan was counting on the continued support of international partners to enhance health-care infrastructure across all regions.

56. She expressed deep concern over the threat that Taliban and Al-Qaida terrorism posed to children in particular. Barbaric new tactics had emerged, such as the recruitment of children as suicide bombers and attacks on girl students and female teachers, which were threatening to reverse gains achieved in empowering women over the previous seven years.

57. She reiterated her Government's commitment to combating both terrorism and the pernicious and discriminatory ideology promoted by extremist groups, in order to give children of both sexes a chance to develop in security.

58. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) said that, despite the undeniable progress made in attaining the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the resolution on a world fit for children, there were several major obstacles: the spread of HIV/AIDS, growing social disparities (in particular as a result of rising food prices and the current economic crisis) and the phenomenon of child soldiers. Much remained to be done, in particular through the adoption of targeted policies to protect the rights of the child. It was necessary to ensure the integrity of the family structure and to invest in women's education so their children would be healthier and better educated. The specific challenges of women migrant workers and their families deserved particular attention.

59. At the national level, Indonesia had carried out vaccination campaigns and had worked to improve maternal health as a result of which by 2013 his country would have achieved the Millennium Development Goal of reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five. With regard to HIV/AIDS, the country had launched a national action plan for the period 2007-2010 prioritizing high-risk populations and providing testing, counselling and access to antiretroviral medication. International support would help to enhance its effectiveness.

60. His country provided nearly universal access to primary education and was committed to ensuring that its children received 12 years of primary education by 2015. A movement in support of free education was spreading in some major cities and the quality of teachers was also being emphasized despite funding constraints. On the subject of child soldiers and of children affected by conflicts, his country considered it important to put an end to the serious violations of the rights of children and to promote their reintegration into society.

61. **Mr. Noghès** (Monaco) said that his country was honouring the commitments it had made in order to build a world fit for children. In particular, it had signed a three-year framework agreement with UNICEF designed to strengthen the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. With respect to health care and early-childhood education, his Government had launched a non-formal education programme focusing on children from underprivileged backgrounds to address low levels of school enrolment and dropping out of school, by providing support from the preschool period to the end of primary education, and also including literacy classes for mothers.

62. He called for greater international cooperation in combating violence against children even though the diverse forms of such violence made that task difficult. His country had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. He hoped that a Special Representative on violence against children would soon be appointed and that the activities of that person would be coordinated with those of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

63. Lastly, on the subject of the use of children in armed conflict, he welcomed the holding in September 2008 at the initiative of France of a ministerial meeting on the establishment and follow-up of the Paris Principles, which was a major initiative in the context of the demobilization and reintegration of child victims of armed conflict.

64. *Mr. Majoor (Netherlands) resumed the Chair.*

65. **Ms. Mwaffisi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of children could not be overemphasized. The most recent population and housing census in Tanzania, made in 2002, showed that children comprised 50 per cent of the total population and it was therefore essential to ensure the survival, development and protection of that future human resource. The Government had taken a number of measures to that end in order to protect children from abuse, violence and exploitation.

66. Her Government had also established the National Costed Plan of Action (2007-2010) for the protection of the most vulnerable children, who numbered 2.5 million, which was aligned with the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, aimed at reducing child labour and sexual exploitation, and served as a reference tool for the Government and stakeholders and their efforts to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and to promote children's rights.

67. The United Republic of Tanzania was continuing to implement activities designed to bring about the full realization of the rights of every child in accordance with the final document adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children entitled "A world fit for children". The priority goals of her country included promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, combating HIV/AIDS, protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence and encouraging children and young people to devise special protection measures for children in need.

68. Primary-school enrolment had reached 97.6 per cent, which should enable the country to attain the Millennium Development Goal on education ahead of time. The Goals relating to child health, however, still lagged behind. Child mortality had not declined sufficiently. The decentralization of health services, the provision of insecticide-treated bednets and vitamin A and a vaccination campaign had helped to reduce deaths among children. The Government would continue to provide free bednets and health care to all pregnant women and children under five. Despite those initiatives, there were still a number of challenges in the promotion and protection of the rights of children. During the high-level meeting on the Millennium Development Goals, the presidents of the United Republic of Tanzania, Chile and Finland had made a commitment to improve health services for mothers, newborns and children and to sensitize the international community to the need to commit more resources to that cause, and had emphasized the need to mobilize political will and partnership.

69. Her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Her country's second report had been submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in August 2004 but had been considered only in May 2006. Her country had also submitted initial reports on the Optional Protocols in January 2007 but they had not been considered until 29 September 2008. The time lag between submission and consideration could be a disincentive to States parties to submit reports on time, and she felt it would be a good idea for the Committee to hold its meetings in two chambers and also to explore other cost-effective ways of eliminating the backlog of reports.

70. The Tanzanian Government was concerned that children were increasingly being used and targeted in conflicts, condemned all those parties that continued to violate the rights of children and called for an end to impunity in that area. It commended the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and supported renewal of her mandate.

71. The promotion and protection of the rights of children required concerted efforts. While it was true that Governments had the primary responsibility for the well-being of the population, the support of the international community was no less important. The United Republic of Tanzania thanked its bilateral development partners, the United Nations agencies and civil society for their financial and technical support.

72. **Ms. Khriesat** (Jordan) recalled that 75 million children still did not attend school, that 147 million people could neither read nor write, and that only

18 countries out of 113 were on track to eliminate by 2015 the disparities between boys and girls in primary education. As education for all, however, was an urgent necessity, her country emphasized the development of open and critical minds. The number of kindergartens had increased, as had enrolment in primary and secondary schools, gender parity had been established in primary education and education accounted for 12 per cent of the Government's budget.

73. While greater efforts were needed to promote a healthy way of life, to ensure an education of quality for children, to protect them against mistreatment, exploitation and violence and to combat HIV/AIDS, progress was possible if countries demonstrated political will and had the necessary resources.

74. Her delegation was awaiting with interest the General Assembly's debate on the request submitted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to hold meetings in parallel chambers. She expressed her country's gratitude to UNICEF for all the programmes implemented in Jordan. She considered the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as an important step towards the promotion and protection of the rights of children with disabilities.

75. Jordan was drawing up a national plan of action based on the resolution entitled "A world fit for children". It had joined the Global Movement for Children, which sought to build on what had been achieved so far and to obtain concrete results. Jordan was seeking to set itself up as a model, creating a safe environment in order to promote children's development and to guarantee their right to survival, protection and participation.

76. In the field of health, Jordan was playing a pioneering role, by ensuring that everyone had access to protective services, particularly mothers and children. It was recommending birth-spacing and had taken measures to improve child nutrition. Rates of infant and young-child mortality had dropped enormously. Vaccination was almost universal, and polio and diphtheria had been eliminated. Despite all that progress, Jordan knew that it needed to make even greater efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, in particular those relating to children.

77. She concluded by recalling that the leadership of Jordan had never slackened in providing support to the children of Palestine and Iraq. The world should remain aware of those children and never forget their daily sufferings, as well as their right to live in dignity. She called on the international community to meet its responsibilities towards them.

78. **Ms. Habte** (Eritrea) said that, while significant strides had been made in the past few years in meeting some basic needs of children, challenges still persisted, since many children continued to suffer poverty, hunger, difficult economic and social conditions, armed conflict, violence, trafficking and displacement. Those challenges could, however, be overcome with the continued commitment by all to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as to the framework established to attain the goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action contained in the resolution entitled "A world fit for children" and to the Millennium Development Goals.

79. In June, Eritrea had submitted its combined second and third periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and had strengthened its coordination and monitoring mechanism to enhance implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols by establishing an Integrated Early Childhood Development Programme in collaboration with its partners.

80. As part of the promotion of healthy lives, the Government had built more hospitals, clinics and health facilities for mothers and their children. The Integrated Management of Childhood Illness programme launched in 2002 had given good results and the rate of vaccination coverage had spectacularly improved. Eritrea had also exceeded the goal set for malaria, eliminated neonatal tetanus and was in the process of fully controlling measles.

81. The Government had prepared and was pursuing a food-security strategy, salt iodization and food fortification and was instituting therapeutic feeding centres in hospitals and clinics. Eritrea had been able, as a result, to significantly lower infant mortality, and should, like four other African countries, be able to achieve Goal 4 of the Millennium Development Goals. Also, overall HIV prevalence had been stabilized and the country had been able to prevent the spread of the epidemic into rural areas. Antiretroviral therapy was available for persons living with AIDS.

82. Based on a conviction that education was the core for sustainable development of the nation, the provision of free and compulsory quality education had

been one of the Government's top priorities. Enrolment in pre-primary education had increased from 4 per cent to 29 per cent while the number of children enrolled in elementary education had more than doubled. The adoption of policies such as the national education policy had contributed to the significant progress in the expansion of the education sector. The Government also regarded it as important to integrate vulnerable and disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities, into the educational system. Recognizing that the education of girls was a fundamental right, the Government was working to narrow gender disparity in education.

83. The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare had proposed to collect the needed data, disaggregated by age and gender, on abuse, victims of violence and perpetrators of abuse, which would facilitate formulation of the necessary policies, programmes and monitoring mechanisms. The Government had banned female genital cutting and had drawn up a national plan of action to implement the ban. It had also taken measures to protect children from the harmful effects of smoking. As a party to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government had also drawn up a plan to combat the commercial exploitation of children.

84. The programmes for vulnerable children had led to the reintegration of 40,000 orphans with their extended families while providing their 15,600 host families with income-generating assets.

85. With regard to the juvenile-system, the Government had created a detention centre and a separate youth-rehabilitation centre for children in conflict with the law. It had also formulated a programme for the establishment of a probation service. The Ministry of Justice had established child-friendly chambers where cases concerning children in conflict with the law were heard separately from adult offenders.

86. **Ms. Asani-Ndelemani** (Malawi) said that promoting and protecting the rights of children and making the world fit for children were among the fundamental responsibilities of the international community, which had acknowledged its duty by adopting various international instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. As a member of that community, Malawi was committed to playing its part, and had become a party to almost all the international instruments that protected and promoted the rights of the child, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had also submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in early 2008.

87. Malawi had made considerable progress in the promotion of children's health, for instance, by adopting an Integrated Management of Child Illness policy. Her Government had intensified its efforts to distribute insecticide-treated mosquito nets, and ensured that the child-immunization rate had remained at over 80 per cent. However, it continued to have difficulty in retaining much-needed skilled health workers, as they were opting to work in developed countries instead. It was hoped that that issue would be adequately addressed at the next Global Forum on Migration and Development, to be held in the Philippines in late October 2008.

88. Malawi believed that investing in universal primary education yielded the highest social returns. Lessons learned from the introduction of free primary education in 1994, and the implementation of the first education plan (1995-2005), would be of use in formulating the second plan (2005-2012). The current framework was aimed at improving the quality of education and addressing existing challenges. Scholarship programmes for girls and special-needs children were being implemented. The Government had also launched a 10-year education plan, in 2007.

89. Malawi had passed a law to protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and it had also just started to implement a number of projects aimed at improving their situation, including a campaign to end mistreatment and exploitation of children. The campaign had produced good results. Furthermore, the Government had conducted sensitization training on human and child trafficking for police and immigration officers stationed at border crossings, other law enforcement agents and community-policing personnel. It had also put in place a national network of non-governmental organizations against child trafficking in order to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of trafficked children.

90. More than 4 million Malawian children lived in poverty, a situation further exacerbated by the growing HIV/AIDS crisis. To curb some of those problems,

Malawi was implementing a cash-transfer scheme, with assistance from civil society, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and UNICEF.

91. Malawi had stepped up its efforts to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. It was also implementing a national plan of action for orphans and other vulnerable children (2005-2009) and was continuing to incorporate HIV/AIDS-related issues into its primary and secondary educational curricula in order to raise awareness of the pandemic among the youth.

92. **Ms. Woldberg** (Netherlands) said that the Committee's debates demonstrated that a great deal had been achieved since the Convention on the Rights of the Child had entered into force 18 years earlier. The Netherlands had made important progress, not only in adapting its legislation and enacting new laws but also in the area of prevention. However, much remained to be done, and further improvement of the international framework on child protection was needed. To that end, his country looked forward to the swift appointment of a Special Representative on violence against children.

93. The promotion and protection of human rights, and in particular, of children's rights, was a top priority for the Dutch Government, which was striving to create a world in which children were safe, where their human dignity was preserved and where they could reach their full potential. In order to achieve those aims, their rights and their physical integrity must not be violated. Unfortunately, such abuses were taking place in every part of the world, as demonstrated in Mr. Pinheiro's report on violence against children. Although the report had been published in 2006, his recommendations were still valid and Member States should work more vigorously towards implementing them.

94. In early 2009, the Netherlands would organize an international conference on violence against girls, with particular emphasis on domestic violence, a well-hidden phenomenon that was difficult to address. The conference aimed to bring together experts and decision-makers in order to facilitate concrete analysis of best practices and thereby contribute to effective and worldwide implementation of Mr. Pinheiro's recommendations.

95. When discussing the situation of children, it was important to recall the plight of over 200 million children who were trafficked or forced into prostitution or slavery. Such a situation was simply unacceptable. Those children had few prospects of improving their living conditions, and it was likely that the cycle would repeat itself with their children. That cycle must be broken as swiftly as possible.

96. The Netherlands strongly hoped that the draft resolution on the rights of the child at the current session would set an ambitious agenda to combat child labour, one that would not only call on all States to ratify ILO Conventions 138 and 182, but would also include time-bound strategies for their implementation. Child labour must be addressed in a multifaceted way, with the support of all available instruments.

97. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) said that, despite the attention given to the rights of children over past years, the creation of international instruments and specialized agencies and the holding of international conferences and summits, more should be done to achieve the established goals, especially as the current crises would have an impact on States' efforts to achieve a world fit for children.

98. Yemen spared no effort to promote and protect the rights of children, in the firm conviction that their rights were an integral part of the teachings of Islam and that children represented the future. His country had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and had ratified a number of relevant international conventions, including the ILO Conventions concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and had incorporated their provisions into its domestic legislation. The Constitution of Yemen guaranteed the promotion and protection of the rights of children and a number of legislative texts had been adopted or amended to ensure that Yemen fulfilled its international obligations in that respect.

99. Yemen had also created a Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, a Ministry of Human Rights, and departments within other relevant ministries. Children's issues had been at the centre of all national development programmes and plans implemented since the 1970s and those efforts had led to the adoption of specific strategies for children.

100. Yemen coordinated its actions with civil-society organizations active in that area in order to defend the

best interests of children. The experience of Yemen's Children's Parliament was unprecedented in the region: it helped to inculcate democratic values and gave children the opportunity to discuss their problems freely with the ministers invited to its meetings.

101. He welcomed the efforts of international partners, especially UNICEF, to improve the situation of children. In conclusion, he noted that Arab children living under Israeli occupation were deprived of their most basic rights, and the international community should shoulder its responsibility for alleviating their suffering and putting an end to the occupation of their land so that they could enjoy their childhood and live in peace.

102. **Ms. Nopakun-Phromyothi** (Thailand) said that six years after the adoption of the resolution entitled "A world fit for children" at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, there was still much to be done despite the progress achieved in ensuring compliance with the commitments made. Thailand had devised a national strategy and a plan of action for the period 2007-2016 which covered the four areas mentioned in the resolution, namely health, education, protection and combating HIV/AIDS, in addition to seven other priority areas. The plan of action should not only benefit children but was also intended to involve them in its formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

103. With regard to education, which was essential to the development of children and also to the country as a whole, Thailand had eliminated gender disparity in primary and secondary education 10 years before the target date and was now working to provide free and universal secondary education by 2015. It provided education both to Thai children and to other children living in its territory, and allocated a substantial budget to the education sector because it considered that the quality of the education offered was of the utmost importance.

104. With regard to protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, Thailand had enacted new laws to amend existing legislation on such issues as the protection of victims of domestic violence, the promotion of the development of children and young people, efforts to counter trafficking in persons, nationality and civil registration. The rights of children should be implemented, inter alia, through the family as the fundamental unit of society and the community. Information should be disseminated to adults about the forms that violence against children could take and their impact on children and society. Children themselves should also be informed of their rights.

105. Thailand also took pride in the fact that it had included young people in its delegation to the General Assembly since 2007. It would continue that practice as an excellent way of promoting cooperation on the rights of children in the international arena.

106. Lastly, Thailand wished to present the candidature of Mr. Sanphasit Koompraphant, founder and director of Thailand's Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights, for election to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

107. **Mr. Vunibobo** (Fiji) said that his country supported the rights of children and in particular the right to be brought up by a mother and a father in a nuclear family. It was unfortunate to see that ideal called into question when it had stood the test of centuries.

108. Children's rights should be seen in the context of a family that was entitled to the support and protection of the State but should not be supplanted by the State. Parents had the right to bring up their children in accordance with their values.

109. Only too often there was talk of rights without reference to responsibilities. Yet rights and responsibilities were not in opposition to each other: on the contrary, they were mutually reinforcing. Just as children had both the right to be brought up and cared for by their parents and the duty to obey and respect them, parents had the duty of caring for their children and the right to expect them to behave properly. Such observations might seem outdated in modern society but it seemed that some of the difficulties currently faced by young people were the result of a concerted effort to destroy the family.

110. With regard to education, neither the State nor the United Nations system should seek to replace the role of parents. It was only by safeguarding the rights of parents and the family that children's rights would be protected.

111. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that, although significant progress had been made since 2002 in relation to children, governments should still scale up their efforts. Partnerships should be made broader and

more focused in order to respect the 2010 and 2015 timelines.

112. Mongolia had adopted and implemented a National Programme of Action for the Protection and Development of Children (2002-2010). It covered six areas: child-friendly legal reforms; a suitable environment for children; quality education for the development of children; family-based child protection; child and adolescent participation and access to information; and capacity-building for national children's organizations. The National Authority for Children and provincial governors were responsible at the national and local levels, respectively, for coordinating and implementing activities within that framework.

113. With regard to legislation, Mongolia had revised a number of laws in order to harmonize them with the international instruments to which it was a party. For instance, it had amended the law on child protection and the Criminal Code. It had also introduced new laws on domestic violence, the prevention of HIV/AIDS, iodine-deficiency disorders, social security for people with disabilities, and family benefits. In October 2007, Mongolia had also submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols.

114. With regard to education, Mongolia had added new texts to existing laws and had adopted policies and standards to promote quality education. Mongolia was interested in using non-formal methods of education and improving the national education system. Efforts were being made to provide laptops to children aged between 6 and 12 years.

115. In the area of health, her country had reduced malnutrition and infant mortality, and infant-immunization coverage had reached 98 per cent.

116. The Government had also taken a series of quick-impact initiatives to support newly weds, infants and children.

117. The five-year review of the Programme of Action showed that poverty was one of the main obstacles to achieving the established goals. One third of the population still lived below the poverty line and many single-parent and migrant households were at risk. The situation of children with disabilities or in difficult circumstances and child labour were additional challenges.

118. Action had already been taken to tackle those problems and the Mongolian Parliament had just endorsed a comprehensive national development strategy covering the period up to 2021 that should facilitate human development in the country. Cooperation with other Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and national non-governmental organizations should also help the country to move forward.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

119. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) welcomed the fact that the representative of Georgia had not denied that Georgian soldiers had committed acts of violence against children. Those acts could not in any case be concealed. The Russian Federation had not started the war, which had had terrible consequences for children, whatever their nationality. It was the Georgian Government which had triggered the hostilities on the night of 8 August, in blatant disregard of existing agreements, international law and any standards of morality. The aggression had been the act of a professional, well-armed and well-trained army that had received foreign assistance. In the first few hours of the conflict it had killed hundreds of people and wounded about 1,500 more. It had since been shown that Abkhazia was to share the fate of South Ossetia. Tens of thousands of people had had to flee their homes and cross the border with Russia, and towns and villages had been destroyed. In Georgia, the return to school might in some instances have been delayed for a month, but in South Ossetia some children could no longer study because their schools had been destroyed or would never study again because they had been killed. It was also known that the Georgian leadership had secretly requested international organizations not to carry out humanitarian activities, thereby preventing children from receiving the assistance they needed. The Russian Federation, acting in a manner consistent with international law, had only acted to protect the population from genocide, a threat which it had already experienced in the 1990s.

120. There had always been ties between the Russian and Georgian peoples and the Russian Federation was sure that those ties would continue in the future.

121. The irresponsible conflict triggered by Georgia was one example of how the interests of children could be sacrificed to politics. It was important for the

international community to make concrete efforts to prevent conflicts and to protect children.

122. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation was false and lacking in substance. Three months previously, Georgia had requested that an impartial international inquiry should be carried out to determine the causes of the conflict and that request remained current, although the Russian Federation had rejected the initiative.

123. **Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation), responding to the representative of Georgia but refusing to enter a political discussion, offered just a few examples based on testimony from organizations responsible for monitoring law enforcement and from NGOs present in the region. Many people, including women and children, had been killed or wounded in their homes or as they fled. The psychological consequences of those events were serious and some incidents could not even be described. It was certain that those crimes, whoever the perpetrators might be, must not go unpunished. No effort should be spared to ensure that they were never repeated anywhere.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.